

FINAL REPORT

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BOARD OF CORRECTIONS

Repeat Offender Prevention Program

Final Report to the Legislature

December 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Legislature responded to rising juvenile crime rates that began in the late 1980s by supporting several initiatives aimed at reversing this alarming trend. One of these initiatives was the Repeat Offender Prevention Program, which sought to determine whether a collaborative model offering enhanced services would reduce the likelihood that certain high-risk juveniles would become chronic offenders (Chapter 730, Statutes of 1994).

Funds allocated to the ROPP in 1996/97 and subsequent fiscal years helped support six-year demonstration projects in seven statutorily designated counties: Fresno, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Mateo and Solano. In 1998/99, San Francisco became eligible for funding and participated in a four-year demonstration project. While each project included unique features based on the county's specific needs and local resources, all of the programs targeted younger first-time probation wards with a multi-problem profile (the "8% population" identified in studies by the Orange County Probation Department). Each project also took a multi-disciplinary team approach to case management in which both high-risk juveniles and their families received enhanced probation and community services.

To assess the overall impact of these projects, the enabling legislation required a statewide evaluation by the Board of Corrections (Board) comparing juveniles who received the ROPP enhanced services with a like group of juveniles who received standard probation services. As highlighted below and discussed in Chapter 2 of this report, the Board's analysis of data submitted for nearly 1,800 juveniles indicates that the ROPP enhanced services produced a number of significant, positive changes.

- ROPP juveniles attended significantly more days of school, made more immediate improvements in grade point average, and were less likely to fall below grade level.
- ROPP projects significantly increased the rate at which juveniles successfully completed court-ordered obligations for restitution, work and community service, and significantly reduced the percentage of positive drug tests.
- For ROPP juveniles, significantly fewer of the highest sustained petitions were for new offenses, both felonies and misdemeanors.
- Significantly fewer ROPP juveniles absconded (were on warrant status).

To assess the effectiveness of the various strategies and interventions implemented by each of the participating counties, the ROPP also required local evaluations of individual programs. As discussed in Chapter 3, the ROPP projects clearly made a positive difference in the lives of many high-risk juvenile offenders, improving their school attendance and performance, increasing accountability on court-ordered obligations, and decreasing the severity of any subsequent criminal behavior. As a result of these findings, half of the ROPP counties decided to continue their entire programs after the grant period, which ended on June 30, 2002, and the other half incorporated specific elements of their projects into other juvenile justice programs.

Despite the inherent challenges in dealing with the difficult population targeted by the ROPP, the participating counties were able to achieve many of their program objectives and to identify effective strategies for ongoing efforts to intervene successfully in the lives of high-risk juvenile offenders and their families. From this perspective, it is clear that the Legislature's investment in the ROPP paid off.

CHAPTER 1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Juvenile crime increased dramatically in the late 1980s and early 1990s, both in California and throughout the nation. Fortunately, there were a number of efforts under way in California – both at the state and local level – to reverse this trend. In the early 1990s, for example, the Orange County Probation Department conducted exploratory studies indicating that a relatively small percentage of offenders with certain risk factors (the “8% population”) accounted for a disproportionate number of all referrals to the juvenile justice system. Based on this research, the Legislature created the Repeat Offender Prevention Program (ROPP) in 1994 and charged the Board of Corrections (Board) in 1996 with administering this initiative, which sought to determine the efficacy of the “8% solution” in curbing juvenile crime and delinquency through locally developed demonstration projects that targeted high-risk youth (Chapter 730, Statutes of 1994).

Target Population

The ROPP target population was first-time juvenile court wards (15 1/2 years of age or younger) who were under the supervision of the probation department and had at least three of the following risk factors (see Appendix A – Intake Assessment Guidelines):

- School behavior and performance problems (attendance, suspension/expulsion, failure of two or more classes);
- Family problems (poor supervision/control, history of domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, family members with criminal backgrounds);
- Substance abuse problems (regular use of alcohol or drugs); and/or
- High-risk behaviors (e.g., stealing, chronic runaway, gang membership).

Enhanced Services

Recognizing the inherent challenges in working with this population of young offenders, the Legislature required counties participating in the ROPP to provide more than the traditional probation services and to deliver those services in a different manner. Specifically, the ROPP projects had to implement an enhanced case assessment and management model in which both the participating youth and his/her family received integrated services developed by a multi-disciplinary team.

At the same time, the Legislature recognized that “one size doesn’t fit all” in juvenile justice efforts and allowed ROPP counties to design and implement demonstration programs tailored to the specific needs and resources in their local jurisdiction. Generally speaking, the ROPP counties took three approaches with their projects. The first was a centralized model in which participants received all program services at a specific site. The second was a decentralized model in which participants received needed services through referrals to an array of public and private agencies. The third was a regional model in which participants accessed services offered in a particular area of the county.

Using these different service delivery models, the ROPP counties offered intensive probation supervision and a wide range of specific interventions and activities – individual and group counseling, mental health services, tutoring, transportation, and vocational training, to name just a few – to the target population (see Appendix B – Project Descriptions).

Evaluation Component

To assess the effectiveness of the ROPP in making a difference with youth at high risk of further criminal involvement, the enabling legislation required counties to evaluate their projects in terms of outcomes for participants who received enhanced services versus those who received traditional services. After being randomly assigned to either the ROPP or comparison group, participants' progress had to be evaluated every six months for up to two years. The results of these evaluations indicate that the ROPP projects not only succeeded in achieving many of their program objectives but also assisted counties in identifying effective strategies for dealing with this difficult population (see Chapter 3, Local Evaluation Highlights).

In addition to these local evaluations, which enabled counties to examine unique program features, the Board analyzed data submitted by all counties in order to provide a statewide perspective regarding the program's impact on curbing juvenile crime and delinquency. The findings of this statewide evaluation indicate that the ROPP made a positive and significant difference in many critical areas (see Chapter 2 – Statewide Evaluation Results).

Funding History

The 1996/97 Budget Act (Chapter 162) appropriated \$3.325 million to help support three-year demonstration projects in seven statutorily designated counties: Fresno, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Mateo and Solano. The 1997/98 Budget Act (Chapter 282) augmented funding by \$3.35 million and extended the grant expiration date from June 30, 1999 to June 30, 2000. Subsequent legislation made the City/County of San Francisco eligible for ROPP funds and extended the grant ending date to June 30, 2001 (Chapter 327, Statutes of 1998). To support this extension, the 1998/99 Budget Act (Chapter 324) appropriated \$3.8 million to the ROPP.

To give counties the time they needed to increase the number of participants in the projects and to thoroughly assess their impact, the 2000/01 Budget Act (Chapter 52) extended the grant to June 30, 2002 and appropriated \$3.8 million to fund continued operations.

Table 1: ROPP Local Assistance Funding¹

County	FY 1996/97	FY 1997/98	FY 1998/99	FY 2000/01	Total Funding
Fresno	\$400,000	\$410,605	\$442,502	\$428,752	\$1,681,859
Humboldt	\$400,000	\$408,405	\$442,502	\$428,752	\$1,679,659
Los Angeles	\$662,500	\$645,287	\$442,502	\$428,752	\$2,179,041
Orange	\$662,500	\$667,488	\$647,486	\$673,736	\$2,651,210
San Diego	\$400,000	\$405,205	\$442,502	\$498,752	\$1,746,459
San Francisco	0	0	\$497,502	\$483,752	\$ 981,254
San Mateo	\$400,000	\$406,505	\$442,502	\$428,752	\$1,677,759
Solano	\$400,000	\$406,505	\$442,502	\$428,752	\$1,677,759
Total	\$3,325,000	\$3,350,000	\$3,800,000	3,800,000	\$14,275,000

¹ Of the available local assistance funds, \$310,773 was reverted due to cost savings.

Technical Assistance

In addition to monitoring grants for contractual compliance, Board staff provided technical assistance to counties during regularly scheduled site and monitoring visits, at biannual project manager meetings hosted by a grantee and/or in response to specific requests. The counties' semi-annual submission of progress reports also served as a vehicle for the provision of technical assistance and program support. These reports consistently indicated that counties faced similar challenges, including those posed by staff turnover, lack of transportation for participants, lack of parental involvement, language/cultural barriers, and data collection.

Recognizing the value of ongoing collaboration in tackling these challenges, staff from the ROPP counties decided to meet twice a year for training workshops that focused on issues of interest, particularly those facing the probation officers, case managers and other "line staff" working with the projects. These sessions, which received a tremendous amount of positive feedback from participants, addressed a variety of topics, including family dynamics, stress management, innovations in wraparound services, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and the causes of addiction and effective treatment methods.

In addition to these workshops, the Board hosted a training session conducted by the California Youth Authority's Office of Prevention and Victims Services on its victim impact curriculum, which addresses such topics as the physical and psychological impact of crime, and offender awareness and accountability. During this session, participants learned about various teaching strategies and resources available to assist them in implementing a victim awareness program in their community.

CHAPTER 2. STATEWIDE EVALUATION RESULTS

Of primary interest to the Legislature was whether the ROPP would prove successful at improving school performance and curbing crime among the relatively small group of juvenile offenders identified as being at high risk of becoming chronic offenders. Thus, in addition to local project evaluations, the Legislature required the Board to assess the overall impact of the ROPP. In response, Board staff worked with ROPP counties in developing a research design that involved the collection and analysis of standardized information on project participants, services, and outcomes.

The statewide evaluation focused on variables that fall into three outcome categories: 1) educational behavior and achievement (school attendance, grade point average, and grade level); 2) personal accountability (court-ordered obligations and drug testing); and 3) criminal behavior (new offenses and probation violations, sustained petitions and type of offense, time in custody, and warrant status). As summarized below (and discussed in greater detail in this chapter), an analysis of data for nearly 1,800 juveniles, comparing juveniles who received the ROPP enhanced services with a like group of juveniles who received standard probation services, indicates that the ROPP produced a number of positive changes on many of these outcome measures. The individual projects also produced significant, impressive results on a number of outcome variables (see Chapter 3).

Major Statewide Findings

- ROPP juveniles attended significantly more days of school, made more immediate improvements in grade point average, and were less likely to fall below grade level.
- ROPP projects significantly increased the rate at which juveniles successfully completed court-ordered obligations for restitution, work and community service, and significantly reduced the percentage of positive drug tests.
- For ROPP juveniles, significantly fewer of the highest sustained charges were for new offenses (felonies and misdemeanors).
- Significantly fewer ROPP juveniles absconded (were on warrant status).

Participant Profile

A total of 1,799 juveniles, nearly 94 percent of the projected number, participated in the eight projects included in the statewide evaluation, with approximately half receiving enhanced program services and the other half traditional probation services.

The ROPP required counties to assess the participants' progress at six-month intervals for up to two years. Table 3 shows the number and percent of program participants who completed each assessment period.

Table 3: Program Participants Who Completed Each Assessment Period

Assessment Period	Number	Percent
Assessment #1 (0 through 6 Months)	1643	91.3%
Assessment #2 (6 through 12 Months)	1436	79.8%
Assessment #3 (13 through 18 Months)	1077	59.9%
Assessment #4 (19 through 24 Months)	860	47.8%

All juveniles were randomly assigned to either the ROPP group, which received enhanced program services, or the comparison group, which received traditional probation services. In this type of research design, the comparability of the two groups at the time of program entry is critical to the validity of the findings. With one exception, there were no statistically significant differences in the background characteristics of the two groups, including their risk factors, at program entry (Table 4).² The only exception was that a significantly higher percentage of the juveniles in the ROPP group were enrolled in school at program entry.

Table 4: Background Characteristics of Participating Juveniles

		ROPP (N=903-946)	Comparison (N=769-853)	Total (N=1672-1799)
Male		78.8%	79.8%	79.3%
Average Age (Years)		14.3	14.3	14.3
Race/Ethnicity:	American Indian	2.4%	1.8%	2.1%
	Black	27.2%	29.9%	28.5%
	Filipino	2.6%	2.2%	2.4%
	Hispanic	42.8%	39.6%	41.2%
	White	17.6%	19.1%	18.3%
	Other	7.4%	7.4%	7.5%
Risk Factor for Family Issues		97.2%	97.3%	97.3%
	Lack of Supervision and Control	85.6%	84.6%	85.1%
	Criminal Family Influence	54.3%	51.5%	53.0%
	Family Violence	40.6%	39.8%	40.2%
Risk Factor for School Issues (Last 6 Months)		96.9%	97.8%	97.3%
	Attendance Problems	73.7%	73.4%	73.6%
	Academic Problems	67.3%	65.3%	66.3%
	Behavior Problems (Suspended/Expelled)	64.0%	64.9%	64.4%
Risk Factor for Substance Abuse		55.5%	55.4%	55.5%
	Alcohol (Occasional Use)	30.0%	29.1%	29.6%
	Alcohol (Frequent Use)	11.0%	11.2%	11.1%
	Drug/Chemical (Occasional Use)	30.2%	28.9%	29.6%
	Drug/Chemical (Frequent Use)	19.6%	20.0%	19.8%
Risk Factor for Pre-Delinquent Behavior		95.2%	94.5%	94.9%
	Gang Identification	36.8%	37.5%	37.1%
	Stealing and Theft Pattern	38.8%	40.7%	39.7%
	Runaway or Stayaway Pattern	23.3%	21.9%	22.7%
	Criminal Peers	85.5%	84.3%	84.9%
Prior 602 WIC Referral (Criminal Offense)		47.0%	45.3%	46.2%
Current Highest Filed Offense Involved:	Firearm	4.6%	5.3%	4.9%
	Other Weapon	16.7%	18.9%	17.7%
	Injury to Victim	21.2%	19.1%	20.2%
Currently Enrolled in School		92.0%	88.1%	90.2%
Below Grade Level		32.4%	27.8%	30.3%

Table 5 compares the initial terms of probation for the juveniles in the two groups. Again, and importantly, the groups were extremely comparable. The only exception was a modest but statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of community service.

² In scientific research, a finding with a 5% or less probability of occurring by chance is generally accepted as being statistically significant.

Table 5: Initial Terms of Probation (Percent Cases)

	ROPP (N=945-946)	Comparison (N=850-851)	Total (N=1796-1797)
Search and Seizure	93.9%	91.8%	92.6%
Fines	76.7%	76.5%	76.6%
Drug/Alcohol Testing	66.6%	65.2%	65.9%
Restitution	42.9%	46.3%	44.5%
Community Service	46.3%	40.3%	43.5%
Court-Ordered Work	31.5%	29.2%	30.4%

Program Service Levels

One of the key questions the ROPP sought to answer is whether high-risk first-time wards of the juvenile court would benefit from enhanced (vs. traditional) probation services. Thus, for purposes of evaluating outcomes, Board staff collected information from counties on the level of services they provided, initially and on a monthly basis, to ROPP juveniles (and their families) and comparison group juveniles. The data clearly indicate that the ROPP group received a significantly higher level of educational and other support services, as well as community supervision services, than the comparison group.

Initial Program Services: Table 6 shows the percent of juveniles who received specific non-enforcement interventions as part of their initial service plans. A significantly higher percentage of the ROPP juveniles received each service, with the most dramatic differences found in tutoring, mentoring, and transportation for family members.

Table 6: Initial Program Services (Percent Cases)

	ROPP (N=941-945)	Comparison (N=849-851)	Total N=(1790-1796)
Transportation for Household Members	68.9%	.4%	36.4%
Parent Education	61.6%	38.9%	50.8%
Classes	66.1%	47.6%	57.3%
Tutoring	42.8%	1.3%	23.1%
Counseling	90.6%	81.2%	86.1%
Mentoring	29.1%	5.1%	17.7%

Monthly Service Levels: Table 7 shows the frequency of face-to-face contacts probation officers had with juveniles and their families. The data reported are monthly averages for each of the four assessment periods during which juveniles remained in the program. As shown in the table, face-to-face contacts with the ROPP juveniles occurred almost daily and were approximately three to five times more frequent than for juveniles in the comparison group. In addition, on average, probation officers contacted the parents of the ROPP juveniles approximately twice a week, which was four to five times more often than for the comparison group juveniles. In both cases, the results are statistically significant.

Table 7: Monthly Average Service Levels

Service	Assessment	ROPP (N=310-906)	Comparison (N=344-820)
Face-to-Face Contacts with Juveniles	1	26.0	4.9
	2	27.7	5.9
	3	24.5	7.1
	4	22.2	7.1
Face-to-Face Contacts with Juveniles' Families	1	10.7	2.0
	2	9.4	1.6
	3	8.5	1.5
	4	8.4	1.7

The Board's evaluation, as noted earlier, focused on three broad outcomes: 1) educational behavior and achievement; 2) personal accountability; and 3) criminal behavior. One advantage of the statewide evaluation was the statistical power gained by aggregating data related to these outcomes from the local programs. Statistical power refers to the ability to conclude that statistically significant (i.e., non-chance) results were obtained – in other words, that there were real differences in the outcomes for the ROPP juveniles and the comparison group juveniles. The larger the number of participants, the smaller these differences must be in order to conclude that they are statistically significant.³

As part of the ongoing collaboration between ROPP counties and Board staff, project and Board staff devoted considerable time to improving the means by which counties extracted, verified, processed and reported the information. Board staff wrote computer software programs for the statewide database developed by Orange County and refined these programs based upon pilot tests in, and feedback from, the counties. These programs greatly facilitated the analysis of data that produced the following findings.

Findings: Educational Behavior and Achievement ⁴

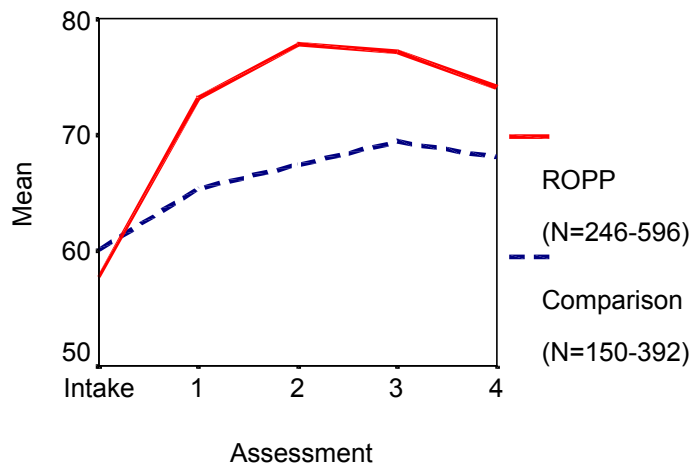
School Attendance: While juveniles in both groups exhibited significant improvement in school attendance across the four 6-month assessment periods, the increase was much more immediate and dramatic for the ROPP juveniles. In addition, the differences between the two groups were statistically significant in all but the fourth period. The greatest difference occurred in the second assessment period, during which ROPP juveniles attended school an average of 11 more days (78 compared to 67).

Figure 1 shows the mean days of school attended by juveniles in the ROPP and comparison groups during each assessment period. The time period labeled "intake" refers to the 6-month period immediately preceding program entry. At intake, the average number of days of school attended by juveniles in the two groups was not significantly different (ROPP-58 days; comparison group-60 days).

³ All of the findings in this report were tested for their significance using either the Chi-Square Test or the Analysis of Variance F Test. Individuals interested in specific information about the significance levels for the statewide evaluation findings are encouraged to contact the Board of Corrections.

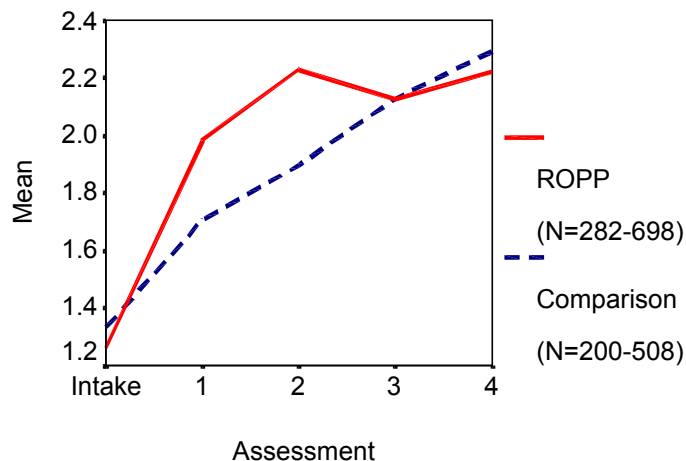
⁴ Access to school records was an ongoing problem for all programs. Consequently, findings related to educational behavior and achievement are based on smaller numbers of juveniles.

Figure 1: Average Days of School Attended



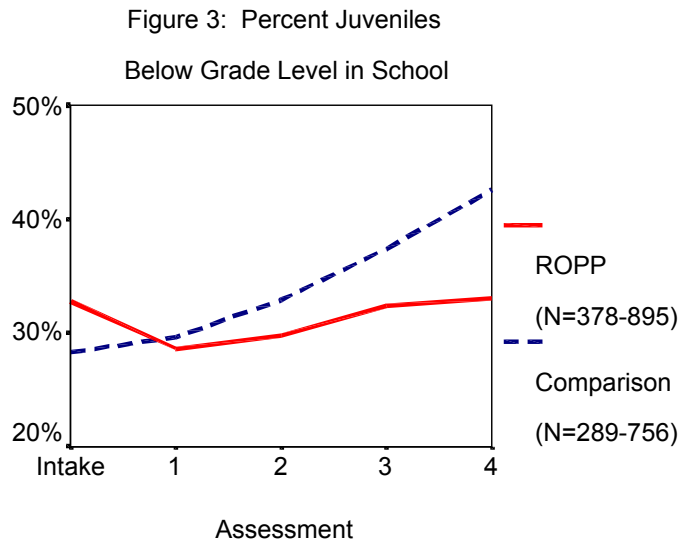
Grade Point Average: As with days of school attended, both groups achieved statistically significant improvements over time in their grade point average. However, the differences were greater and more immediate for the ROPP juveniles and were statistically significant during the first two assessment periods. Figure 2 shows changes in mean grade point average (GPA). At intake, both groups had average GPAs of approximately 1.3. ROPP juveniles achieved an average GPA of approximately 2.0 (average grade of “C”) during the first 6-month period; in contrast comparison group juveniles did not achieve this level until the third assessment period. Both groups maintained a “C” average during the final two assessments.

Figure 2: Average Grade Point Average



Grade Level: The final school-related outcome variable examined for the statewide evaluation was the change in the percentage of juveniles in each group who were below grade level in school at intake and during each of the four assessment periods. As shown in Figure 3, results for this outcome were available for a larger number of juveniles. At intake, 33% of the ROPP juveniles as compared to 28% of the comparison group juveniles were

below grade level in school, a difference that approached but did not achieve statistical significance. However, by the last assessment, a statistically significant higher percentage of the comparison group juveniles were below grade level (43% vs. 33% of the ROPP group).



Findings: Personal Accountability

Completion of Court-Ordered Obligations: Strong evidence exists for the greater personal accountability required of, and demonstrated by, ROPP juveniles in satisfying court-ordered obligations. Table 7 shows the completion rates of the two groups for the court-ordered obligations of restitution, fines, court-ordered work and community service. The completion rate was higher for ROPP juveniles on all obligations and the differences between the two groups were statistically significant for restitution, court-ordered work, and community service.

Table 7: Percent of Juveniles Who Completed Obligations

Obligation	ROPP		Comparison	
	Percent	N	Percent	N
Restitution	37.0%	192	23.9%	180
Court-Ordered Work	75.1%	185	65.4%	153
Community Service	64.1%	234	49.5%	200
Fines	49.0%	365	42.9%	340

Drug Testing: Further evidence of the greater accountability required of ROPP juveniles can be seen in both the frequency and the results of drug testing. The overall results clearly show that ROPP juveniles were consistently tested more often and consistently had fewer positive tests.

Table 8 shows the frequency with which juveniles in the two groups were subject to drug testing, both in terms of the percentage of juveniles tested and the average number of tests

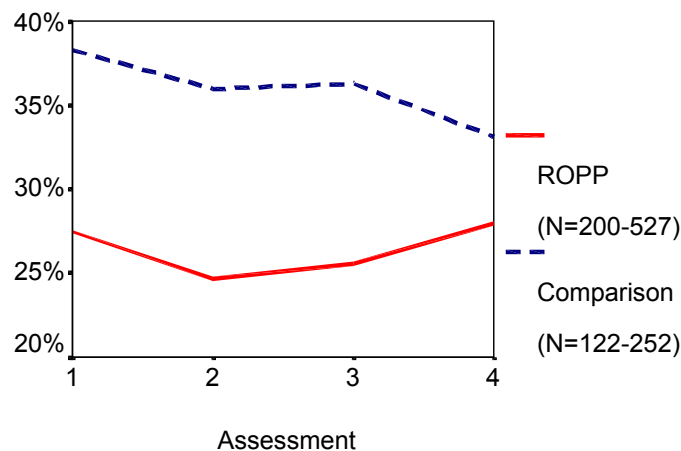
administered to those juveniles. During each assessment period, a significantly higher percentage of ROPP juveniles were tested as compared to juveniles receiving standard probation services. Furthermore, among those who were tested, for all but the third assessment period, ROPP juveniles were tested significantly more often.

Table 8: Frequency of Drug Testing

Index	Assessment	ROPP	Comparison
Percent Tested	1	59.1% (N=892)	31.9% (N=791)
	2	55.9% (N=767)	28.8% (N=692)
	3	51.4% (N=580)	27.7% (N=524)
	4	50.5% (N=396)	33.8% (N=361)
Mean Number of Tests	1	5.16 (N=527)	2.59 (N=252)
	2	6.24 (N=429)	3.68 (N=199)
	3	6.32 (N=298)	5.08 (N=145)
	4	7.21 (N=200)	4.68 (N=122)

Figure 4 shows the average percentage of positive tests for each group during the same time periods. The percentages fluctuate modestly across time periods (ROPP juveniles, 25% to 28%; comparison group, 33% to 38%) but are consistently higher for the comparison group juveniles. For all but the last assessment, the differences between the groups are statistically significant.

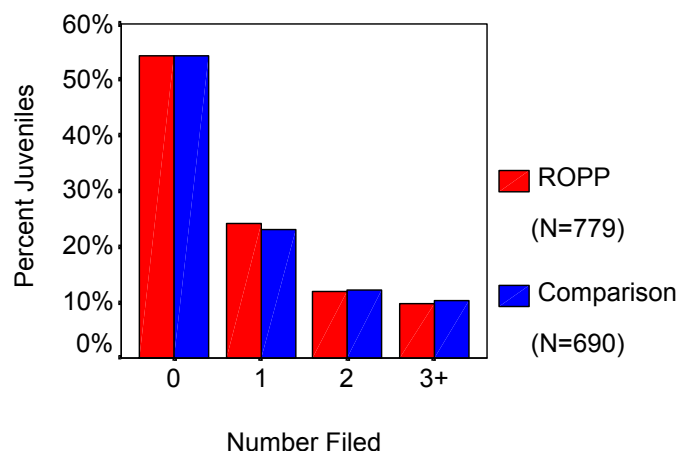
Figure 4: Average Percent Positive Drug Tests



Findings: Criminal Behavior

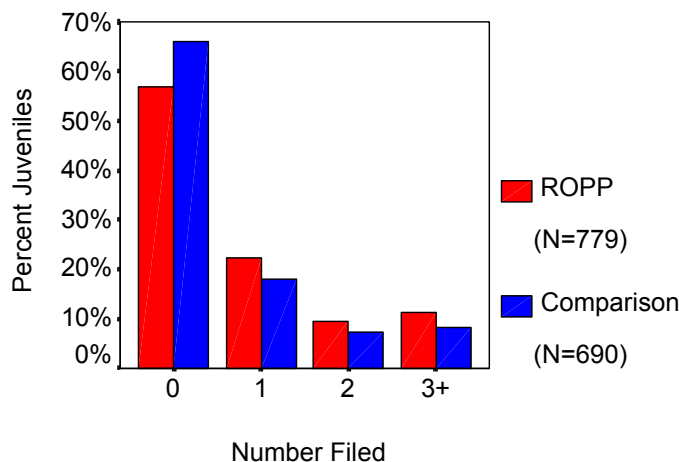
New Offenses: Although individual counties were successful in reducing the number of new law violations among ROPP juveniles (see Chapter 3), the statewide results indicate that ROPP juveniles were just as likely as comparison group juveniles to have petitions filed for new offenses (Section 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code). As shown in Chart 1, close to 55% of the juveniles in each group had no petitions filed for a new law violation. While a slightly higher percentage of juveniles in the comparison group had two petitions or more petitions filed for new law violations, the overall pattern of results for the two groups is not statistically significant.

Chart 1: Number of 602 Petitions Filed
for New Law Violations



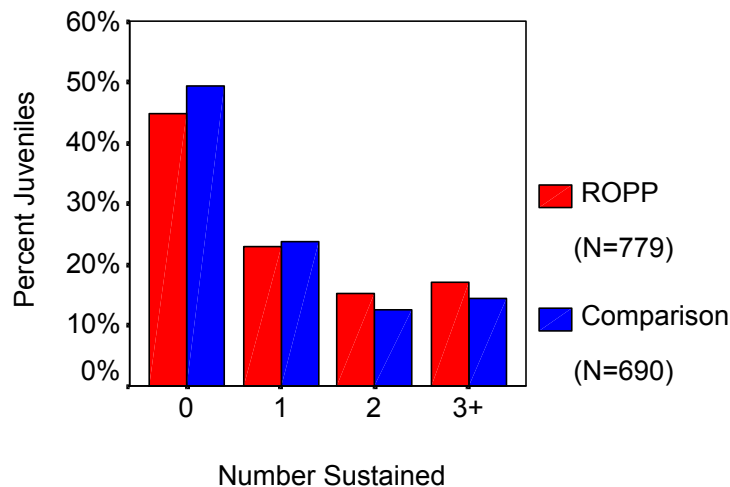
Probation Violations: Chart 2 shows that ROPP juveniles had a higher number of petitions filed for probation violations than comparison group juveniles. The overall results are statistically significant. This finding is not surprising given the much higher levels of program staff involvement, including intensive probation supervision, in the lives of ROPP juveniles.

Chart 2: Number of 602 Petitions Filed
for Probation Violations



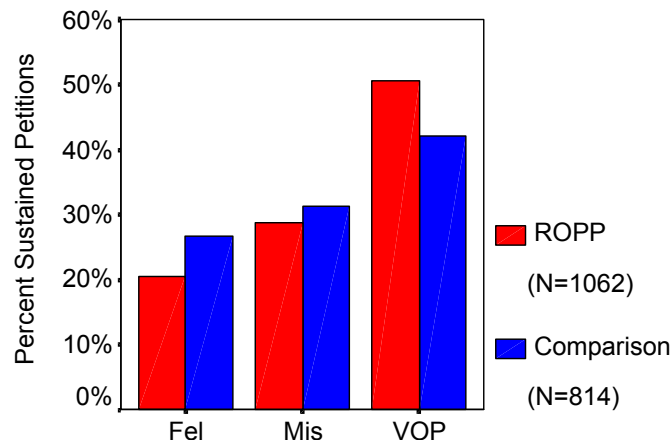
Sustained Petitions: Chart 3 presents the number of sustained petitions (i.e., those upheld by the court). While a lower percentage of ROPP juveniles had no sustained petitions (45% vs. 49%), the overall pattern of results for the two groups do not differ significantly.

Chart 3: Number of 602 Petitions Sustained



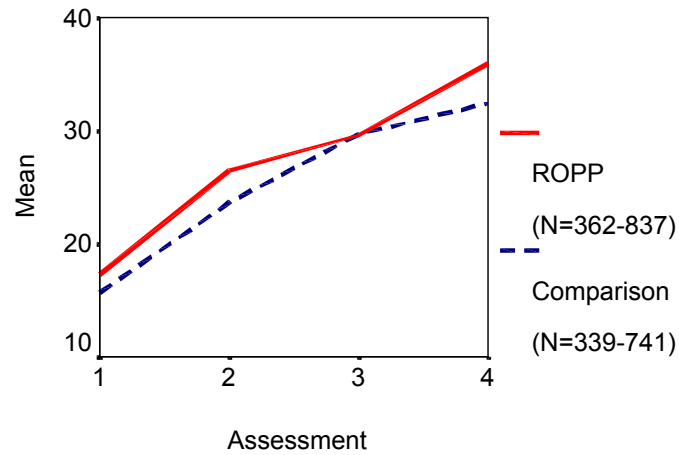
Highest Sustained Charges: Chart 4 shows the breakdown of highest sustained charges for the two groups. Here the results for the two groups differ significantly, and the data clearly indicate that the ROPP projects succeeded in reducing the severity of subsequent criminal behavior. As shown in the chart, more of the highest sustained charges for ROPP juveniles were for probation violations (51% vs. 42%), which generally involve technical violations of the terms of probation, and fewer were for new law violations – either felonies (21% vs. 27%) or misdemeanors (29% vs. 31%).

Chart 4: Highest Sustained Petition



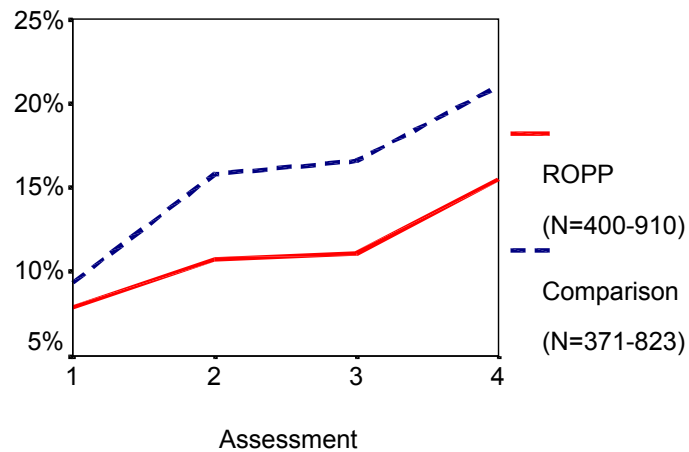
Time in Custody: The data related to time in custody do not show any statistically significant differences between the two groups. As shown in Figure 6, both groups exhibited significant increases in custody days across assessment periods. For the ROPP juveniles, this may be attributable to the more intensive level of probation supervision they received and the resulting increase in the number of probation violations.

Figure 6: Average Days in Custody



Warrant Status: The statewide evaluation also examined the percentage of juveniles who absconded (on warrant status). As shown in Figure 7, fewer ROPP juveniles were on warrant status during each assessment period and, for all but the first assessment, the differences between the groups are statistically significant.

Figure 7: Percent of Juveniles on Warrant Status



CHAPTER 3. LOCAL EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

The overarching goal of the ROPP was to determine whether a collaborative, multi-disciplinary model involving enhanced services was successful in reducing the likelihood that high-risk youth would go on to become serious repeat offenders. For this reason, the local evaluation conducted by each county included an examination of the outcomes for participants (quantitative research) as well as the strategies and/or specific interventions that worked most effectively with this high-risk population (qualitative research). This chapter provides highlights of the counties' findings in both areas, as well as the challenges they encountered in working with high-risk youth and their families within the context of a new service delivery model. Those interested in reviewing the project-specific studies may contact the Project Manager for the particular county (or counties) and request a copy of its final project report (see Appendix C – Program Directory).

Participant Outcomes

The ROPP counties achieved varying degrees of success in terms of the different outcome measures (educational behavior and achievement, personal accountability, and criminal behavior), which is not surprising given the backgrounds of the high-risk juvenile offenders participating in these projects. Yet, as the following highlights show, the ROPP projects clearly made a positive difference in the lives of these youth and their families.

Fresno County: The percent of new law violations for felony offenses was almost twice as high for comparison group juveniles (45% vs. 24% for ROPP juveniles), and significantly more ROPP juveniles completed their accountability requirements. For example, 62% of the ROPP juveniles paid all their restitution (vs. 28% for the comparison group), and 71% of ROPP juveniles completed their community service (vs. 17% for the comparison group).

Humboldt County: Over the course of the four six-month assessments, average days in custody almost tripled for the comparison group juveniles (going from 11.5 days to 32.8 days), whereas there was no significant change for the ROPP juveniles. By the fourth assessment, comparison group juveniles spent an average of 13 more days in custody than ROPP juveniles (32.8 days vs. 19.8 days). ROPP juveniles also exhibited significant reductions in several risk factors (family issues, substance abuse, pre-delinquent behavior) and a significant increase in family empowerment (as reported by family members). The later was found to be related to reduced recidivism among ROPP juveniles, who received strength-based, family-centered services to effectively resolve problems, whereas among comparison group juveniles, who did not receive such services, greater family empowerment was found to be related to increased recidivism. Further, empowerment resulting from services received by the families of ROPP juveniles was specifically found to reduce several types of youth self-reported behavioral, emotional, and thought problems--delinquency-related problems that tend not to be addressed in traditional probation services focused exclusively on enforcement and accountability.

Los Angeles County: The ROPP juveniles in Los Angeles County, compared to the comparison juveniles who received standard probation services, performed significantly better on many key academic outcomes. Specifically, ROPP juveniles consistently attended significantly more days of school and achieved higher grades (3 assessments), passed more classes (2 assessments), and earned more school credits (3 assessments) than their comparison group counterparts. Although no significant differences were detected between the ROPP juveniles and the comparison juveniles in terms of subsequent arrests and sustained petitions, fewer of the new petitions for ROPP juveniles were for violent offenses.

Orange County: Over the 24-month assessment period, the ROPP juveniles, on average, had significantly fewer petitions filed for new law violations (1.3 vs. 1.8), and among those with commitment orders, had fewer days ordered (212 days vs. 269 days). Further, for each of the four 6-month assessment periods, significantly fewer ROPP juveniles were on warrant status, and by the fourth assessment, the percentage of juveniles on warrant status was almost three times as great from the comparison group (21.9% vs. 7.4%). Finally, the ROPP juveniles attended school significantly more often, on average, than their comparison group counterparts, a difference that was greatest during the first assessment period (82 days vs. 55 days).

San Diego County: Through the entire 24-month assessment period, the percentage of highest sustained petitions for felonies was almost twice as high for the comparison group juveniles (40% vs. 23% for the ROPP juveniles). In addition, approximately twice as many ROPP juveniles completed their court-ordered restitution (55% vs. 28%), and for all but the last assessment, the average days on warrant status was significantly higher for comparison group juveniles (e.g., assessment three, 13.6 days vs. 4.5 days for the ROPP juveniles).

San Francisco County: Local evaluation measures were used to assess academic achievement, social skills, family relationships and communications, school bonding, self-esteem, ethnic identity, and risk behaviors. Despite small sample sizes, by the fourth assessment, ROPP juveniles demonstrated higher mean levels of family communication, reduced drug use, positive peer relationships, and better health. Furthermore, based on scores on a standardized test of academic achievement, ROPP juveniles performed better than comparison group juveniles in academic knowledge, reading comprehension, math and spelling. In addition, by the fourth assessment, a significantly higher percentage of ROPP juveniles had also completed their restitution obligation.

San Mateo County: While comparable at intake, by the fourth assessment (and for most of the other three assessments), significantly fewer ROPP juveniles exhibited three of the four risk factors associated with this program: family Issues (70% vs. 86% for the comparison group); pre-delinquent behaviors (64% vs. 87%); and school Issues (69% vs. 87%). Further, whereas more ROPP juveniles were below grade level in school at program entry (43% vs. 32%), by the fourth assessment, over twice as many juveniles in the comparison group were below grade level (51% vs. 22%).

Solano County: Although few significant statistical differences were found in the overall results for the two groups, the county attributes these results in part to “an initial increase in ‘acting out’ behavior” among ROPP juveniles stimulated by much closer monitoring and the initiation of intense treatment for families. However, as these youth “worked through issues, and made increasing progress in treatment, the need to ‘act out’ decreased, and was manifested in a gradual decline in recidivism.” The county also reports that among those juveniles who reached age 18 during the project (ROPP group-22; comparison group-19), those who received enhanced services, on average, were charged with fewer offenses as an adult (5.3 vs. 3.4). Although based on small numbers, these results offer some hope that the real effects of the program will be manifested over the longer term as the youth enter adulthood.

Program Successes

Process evaluations of the ROPP projects indicate that several strategies and interventions worked. The following section highlights some of the programmatic successes reported by many, if not all, of the participating counties.

Collaboration: A collaborative approach involving staff from various disciplines – probation, mental health, education, and community service providers, among others – proved to be an effective strategy in ROPP projects, not only with respect to addressing the needs of high-risk youth and their families but also facilitating the efforts of program staff. As Orange County noted, “Minors get services that they would not have received ordinarily and families have access to many resources and referrals that they would not have otherwise.” Further, as Humboldt County put it, the collaboration between partnering agencies provided staff with “new ideas and updated approaches to their jobs” as well an “outlet and an avenue of support, which increased staff efficacy.” Several counties cited cross training as a key to the success of the collaborative process. This training helped to bridge the cultural gap between professionals from different disciplines and to build trust and respect between agencies that take different approaches to working with young offenders and their families.

Case Planning and Management: The multi-disciplinary teams that collaborated on these projects provided integrated case planning and management, often using a strengths-based approach that actively includes the family. This strategy, which typically involves the development of wraparound service plans tailored to meet the individualized needs of juveniles and their families, was effective in many counties. In San Diego County, for example, this approach provided probation officers the “flexibility and innovation” to match youth and their families with the type of services they truly needed. San Mateo County echoed this sentiment in reporting that the teamwork approach to case planning and management allowed staff to “support each other and their clients in the best way possible,” and Solano County emphasized the value of “individualized treatment planning and implementation” in its efforts.

Family Involvement: Believing that the families of high-risk juveniles are part of the equation and can be part of the solution in putting their lives on a positive track, the Legislature required ROPP counties to provide services both to the participating minors and their families. This belief proved true, and a number of counties reported that engaging youths' families, although often difficult, produced results well worth the extra effort. As San Mateo County reported, “The model of treating the whole family was found to be successful. Parents felt supported and were empowered to hold their children accountable, eventually becoming less reliant on the juvenile justice system.” Humboldt County also emphasized the benefits of giving families “the tools with which they can address and resolve their problems” and reported that the ROPP families learned “the value of having help and support” in dealing with crises and solving problems. Los Angeles County added a unique element to this model, using family advocates – all of whom were parents, and many of whom have had experience with the criminal justice system – as an integral part of the multi-disciplinary treatment team. The county indicated that family advocates were “instrumental in fostering parent buy-in” and reported that parents felt more comfortable seeking support from the family advocates because they could relate to them.

On-Site Services: Several counties touted the benefits of offering centrally located services, not only for program staff and participants but also for community-based service providers. Orange County, for example, implemented a single-site day treatment program in which co-located staff provided major intervention services to participating youth and families. One of the most important benefits of this approach, as reported by the county, was that it provided youth “the opportunity to form close relationships with different staff involved with the program,” thereby engendering the trust and communication that are essential to responsive case planning and management. San Diego noted that centrally located services “are easier for staff and families to access” and San Francisco reported that having a “one-stop-

shop” in which the mental health team and probation officers were onsite helped to address the negative behaviors and actions of participating juveniles. On-site mental health services also proved to be a successful feature of Los Angeles County’s project.

Reduced Caseloads: According to several counties, reduced caseloads had a positive impact on both probation supervision and service delivery. Fresno County summed up the success of this strategy for probation officers in stating that they “were able to provide closer supervision of minors, increasing accountability and development of individualized treatment plans. The small case load also increased rapport between ward and probation officer and allowed for a more collaborative relationship among project staff, school officials and service providers.” San Francisco, which included an integrated arts education program in its ROPP project, was another county reporting that low “caseloads” (i.e., student to teacher ratio) worked well.

In addition to citing the success of these programmatic strategies, ROPP counties reported that a number of specific interventions proved very effective in their projects, including peer mentoring, transportation services, in-home services services, job preparation training and placement, literacy development, graduated sanctions, intensive alcohol and drug-related treatment services, and participation incentives.

Program Challenges

In semi-annual progress reports submitted to the Board as well as their final evaluation report, counties consistently indicated that they encountered many of the same challenges in implementing and administering the ROPP demonstration projects. These include:

- Retaining qualified staff (case managers, probation officers, teachers, etc.);
- Engaging parents and keeping them involved;
- Addressing the complex substance abuse issues facing youth and their families;
- Overcoming language/cultural barriers between program staff and participants;
- Providing transportation for participants;
- Contracting with community-based service providers;
- Gathering data and tracking participants; and
- Fostering continued collaboration and communication between and within agencies.

Understanding what these challenges entailed and what counties did, or suggest that others do, to overcome these challenges is valuable information for policymakers at the state and local level as well as anyone interested in implementing a successful program for high-risk juvenile offenders. For more information about the challenges that confronted a specific county, readers may contact the Project Manager of that county (see Appendix C – Program Directory).

CONCLUSION

There are formidable challenges in successfully intervening in the lives of young offenders who have problems in school, problems with substance abuse, and problems within their families. When the overwhelming majority of these youth also engage in high-risk behaviors such as gang involvement, the challenges grow even tougher. Yet, as evidenced by the encouraging results of the both the statewide and local evaluations of the ROPP projects, the challenges presented by this difficult population are not insurmountable – and that may be the most important finding of all.

The ROPP required local agencies – probation, education, mental health and others – to engage in partnerships aimed at promoting positive behavior among the relatively small percentage of juvenile offenders identified as being most at risk of becoming serious repeat offenders. While not always easy to develop or maintain, this collaborative approach was a key factor in the overall success of the ROPP projects. By incorporating the expertise of professionals from a variety of disciplines into treatment planning and service delivery, these projects were able to make a positive difference in the lives of high-risk juveniles as well as their families.

In addition to underscoring the value of collaborative efforts, the ROPP enabled counties to identify specific strategies and interventions that worked most effectively in addressing the special needs of their target population. Based on the findings of their local evaluations, half of the counties participating in the six-year demonstration program decided to continue – in some cases, even expand – their projects after the grant period, using funds from the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act and/or other available resources to support these efforts. The remaining counties incorporated successful elements of their projects into other local juvenile justice programs.

The ROPP counties accomplished a great deal – and learned a great deal – during the past six years. In so doing, these counties have provided state and local policymakers a wealth of information that will undoubtedly prove useful for years to come.

Appendix A
Intake Assessment Guidelines

Intake Assessment Guidelines (746 (b) W&IC)

*Assessment Areas	Guidelines for “Yes” Response
I. FAMILY ISSUES (Any one or more of A, B, C, or D) A. Lack of Supervision & Control	Parent(s) behavior indicates one or more of the following conditions exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporadic monitoring of child’s friends and whereabouts • No concern for child’s whereabouts or who associates are (e.g., no curfew) • Unwilling or unable to respond to child behavior. • Inconsistent or ineffective control/influence over child’s behavior (minor doesn’t follow rules, disobeys curfew, sneaks out) • Truancy; Pattern of Runaways; Stay Away Behavior
B. Criminal Family Influence	An immediate family member or relative who interacts with minor is/has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a prior record • in jail or prison • on probation or parole • a pending matter in Juvenile or Criminal Court
C. Family Violence (documentable child/elder abuse or family/domestic violence)	Minor’s family has a prior or pending W&IC 300 filing, i.e., child abuse, neglect, abandonment or placement in a residential facility. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) voluntary contracts through Child Protective Services b) witnessed events by a peace officer c) physical evidence of neglect or abuse [RECORD DETAILS OF THIS AND ANY OTHER ABUSE]
D. Environmental Factors (at program screening stage, not at Intake)	Family is under significant stress from one or more of the following conditions that impacts the family’s ability to provide adequate supervision: <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 50%;">*Divorce</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Financial Problems</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Abandonment</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Frequent Relocations</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Substance Abuse</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Death</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Serious Illnesses/Disabilities</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Home Unstable, Chaotic, Turmoil</div> <div style="width: 50%;">*Difficulty in Cultural Assimilation</div> </div> [CIRCLE ANY THAT APPLY, NOTE ANY ADDITIONAL SOURCES, EXPLAIN]
E. Language Barrier	Minor and/or parent(s) or guardian(s) are non-English or limited English speaking [IDENTIFY WHO AND WHAT LANGUAGE] <i>NOTE: These data are of value but not to be used unless coupled with the other factors under FAMILY ISSUES.</i>
II. SCHOOL (at least one of the following)	
A. Attendance Problems	Minor’s school attendance shows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple occurrences of truancy, skipping classes, a pattern of not attending, resulting in formal school action • s/he is not currently attending school, is not enrolled or disenrolling themselves
B. Academic Problems	Minor has received two or more “Fs” <u>within the last academic year</u> or is failing academically

C. Behavior	Minor has been suspended or expelled for problem behavior and/or is currently suspended or expelled (does not mean school detention penalty) [INDICATE REASON AND FREQUENCY]
D. Learning Disabilities	Minor has current or prior history of one of the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diagnosed learning disability, e.g., attention deficit disorder, severe dyslexia • evidence of mild or severe disability although no formal diagnosis/designation has been made <i>NOTE: English as a second language (ESL) issue is excluded</i> <i>NOTE: These data are of value but not to be used unless coupled with the other factors under SCHOOL.</i>
III. SUBSTANCE ABUSE	Minor and/or parent report any use by minor of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a singular type of substance abuse on multiple occasions and beyond experimentation OR • two or more substances used one or more times [IDENTIFY AGE WHEN FIRST USE AND FREQUENCY]
IV. PRE-DELINQUENCY BEHAVIORS	
A. Gang Member (at least one of the following)	Minor admits and/or is known to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a gang and/or tagging crew member • associated with a gang (“hangs with”, “backs up”) self-admission or reported by police or school intelligence, not peers
B. Stealing Pattern	Minor has been involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mild to moderate <u>repeated</u> stealing which appears likely to continue Minor has not been arrested for but has been reported as stealing by multiple sources, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents • school • neighbors • informal police contacts or field interviews (F.I.s) [IDENTIFY FREQUENCY AND TYPE]
C. Runaway Pattern	Minor has a history of one or both of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>repeated</u> episodes of runaway for a <u>brief duration</u> (i.e., 3 or more times overnight or for several days • one or more times for <u>extended duration</u> [IDENTIFY FREQUENCY AND REASONS] (note: short episodes may indicate abusive relationships and extended periods indicate likelihood to runaway again; these are different from reported stayaways)
D. Delinquent Peers	Minor’s primary peer group includes or is limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peers involved in serious delinquent behavior, and/or • s/he “hangs out” with other probationers

Appendix B

Project Descriptions

ROPP PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Fresno County used a wrap-around service approach that emphasized family and community strengths. Each ward assigned to the treatment group received an assessment from a multidisciplinary team comprised of representatives from probation and school districts, as well as a mental health clinician, a case manager, the parent(s) and a family case advocate, if desired. The team developed an individualized service plan for each ward and periodically reviewed it to determine progress and/or the need for modification. The assigned probation officer had lead responsibility for implementing and coordinating the recommended services (i.e., ongoing case management) and for providing intensive supervision. The project contracted for psychological services and parenting education classes. To address the critical need for school-related information, Fresno County collaborated with school officials in developing a software program that allowed ROPP staff to directly access information, thus enabling them to react in a timely matter to school and attendance problems. Fresno County served 270 program participants in the rural communities of Clovis, Selma, Sanger and Reedley.

Humboldt County developed a multi-agency, multidisciplinary approach that included Neighborhood Service Hubs and wraparound services. The Hubs were strategically located in four regions of the county (Eureka, McKinleyville, Fortuna and Garberville) and were supported by probation officers, a mental health case manager and clinician, Child Welfare Services, police, Healthy Start, a school counselor, the Youth Services Bureau, health professionals and other private service providers. Wards residing on or near the Hoopa Valley Reservation also received services. Each of the two ROPP teams included a probation officer and a facilitator. Having a maximum caseload of 23 allowed the probation officer to focus on the court orders of probation while the facilitator focused on the family team, which developed a service plan to meet the family's needs based on its strengths and resources. The Hubs coordinated community resources and services identified in the service plan. This project served 145 first-time wards.

Los Angeles County used a multi-agency multi-disciplinary case planning conference (CPC) to assess each participant and develop an individualized strengths-based service plan. A County Department of Mental Health contract agency coordinated the efforts of the CPCs and reviewed cases every 75 days. Program participants and their families received services from 16 collaborative and linkage agencies. The County Office of Education provided basic educational services at a school that also served as the site for after school services and activities. Services included anger management; health education; outpatient mental health services; individual, family and substance abuse counseling; mentoring and tutoring; recreation and socialization activities; transportation; and vocational readiness training for care givers. The project also provided participants the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of alternative educational opportunities, including fine art classes on digital editing, animation and lighting techniques. Deputy Probation Officers provided case management services and intensive supervision to ensure that service plans were implemented and modified as necessary. Los Angeles County served 327 participants residing within 16 zip codes in South Central Los Angeles.

Orange County served first-time high-risk wards through a collaborative effort of the Probation Department, the County Departments of Education and Health Care (Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services) and other contracted agencies, including Community Services Programs and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC) was the primary source of services, bringing together the ward, the family and a broad range of service providers in one location. An individualized service plan was developed for each referral by the on-site assessment team comprised of a probation officer, teacher(s), mental health staff, a nurse practitioner, counselors responsible for afternoon recreation/community service/life skills programming, a

substance abuse counselor, and intensive in-home family counselors. Social services agency representatives and/or a community case advocate also participated in the development of the plan. The majority of services, including school, were offered at the YFRC, and linkages to other services were made as necessary. A transportation component was included in the program to ensure that families had access to needed services and that minors attended school daily. Volunteers provided extensive support to this project, which served 270 juveniles in the cities of Anaheim, Buena Park and Fullerton.

San Diego County used four multi-disciplinary, multi-agency teams that each worked with up to 20 families in developing and implementing a strengths-based service plan designed to empower program participants and their family members to effectively handle family, school and community issues, comply with court orders, and remain law-abiding. The teams were comprised of a Probation Officer, Protective Services Worker, Community Family Monitor, Alcohol and Drug Specialist, and Student Worker. A part-time Clinical Psychologist and Family Counselor assisted the teams with the families. The program was located in the Family And Community Team OutReach Center (FACTOR), which opened in March 1999 as a collaborative effort between the Probation Department, Health and Human Services Agency, County Office of Education and Union of Pan Asian Communities. The FACTOR Center offered a broad spectrum of on-site services, including a Summit School program with two classrooms, day drug treatment and family counseling. Families were also connected with programs and resources within the community infrastructure. The level and type of service were adjusted as the families became more capable of managing their own life domains. The project established a Boys and Girls Scout troop for participants, many of whom undertook community service projects for non-profit organizations. This project served 367 participants residing in 16 zip codes of the county.

San Francisco County designed and implemented an integrated Arts Education program for students in the sixth through ninth grades to enhance their thinking and analytical skills as well as creativity in individual expression. The program operated at the Paul Robeson and Diego Rivera Academy, which is located in the Bayview-Hunters Point District. Supporting this collaborative effort on site were the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department, Children's Mental Health Services, the Department of Human Services, and the San Francisco Unified School District. Students received a comprehensive psycho-educational test and a multi-disciplinary team met with the participant and his/her family within 45 days of acceptance into the program. The Child Welfare Worker and family therapist visited the child and family in their home setting, and family therapy was conducted weekly on site or in the home. Clinical staff facilitated on-site individual and group therapy with the students on a weekly basis. In addition, the clinical staff and probation officer offered crisis intervention support to the teaching staff, and a substance abuse counselor offered drug assessment, counseling and group therapy. Bimonthly field trips were integrated into the schedule, enabling students to enjoy local musical and dramatic performances as well as cultural events. Transportation to and from school was offered to all interested families, and tutors were brought into the school to work with students who were struggling academically. The San Francisco program served 58 juveniles.

San Mateo County provided intensive family-centered services designed to empower the young person and his/her family to create strong healthy bonds with each other and their community. Program eligibility was determined through an assessment in the Probation Department's Intake and Investigation unit. Four Deputy Probation officers, two Juvenile Group counselors, a Mental Health Therapist, and a Social Worker formed a multi-disciplinary team that completed a needs assessment and developed a preliminary case plan for each ward admitted to the program. Strategies for interventions and services were identified for the family in the areas of education, treatment, recreation and/or living arrangements. Probation officers provided ongoing supervision and service coordination. Program Development workshops were an ongoing component of the project. Through this process, and in collaboration with the Jefferson Union High School District and Daly City Youth

Health Center, the program established the Accelerated Resource Center (ARC) in the target area of North San Mateo County. The ARC houses a 20-student classroom and operated with expanded hours to provide additional family support as well as informational and recreational activities. San Mateo County served 195 program participants in the cities of Brisbane, Broadmoor, Colma, Daly City, Pacifica, and South San Francisco.

Solano County used a multidisciplinary team approach to assess cases and make service referrals. Program participants assigned to the treatment group received intensive supervision and services. Youth and Family Services, a community-based multi-service organization, was the main provider of services for the project. Each minor in the program was assigned a probation officer and Youth and Family Services case manager who shared a caseload of up to 20 juveniles and their family members and developed an individualized plan for each participating minor. At a minimum, minors were required to complete an individual and group-counseling program with their assigned case manager. Group counseling was a 24-week core program that covered substance abuse, anger management, conflict resolution, job search, gangs, self-esteem and gender issues. Minors in need of mentors, educational tutoring or other specialized programs were referred to appropriate community-based agencies if Youth and Family Services were unable to meet their needs. Solano County served 167 program participants in the cities of Benicia and Vallejo in the south, and the cities of Fairfield, Suisun, and Vacaville in the north.

Appendix C

Program Directory

PROGRAM DIRECTORY

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